Introduction

Andy has provided us with some memorable moments over the years, but none as momentous as one he provided this year. For the statistically minded it was the 24,711th recorded shot of BEC competition. For those of us present it was a 7-iron struck high, straight and with a little draw, pitching just beyond the flag appearing to roll briefly and then abruptly disappearing from view. Had it dropped in or had it hidden itself behind the flag in a cruel illusion? It was hard to tell from 169yds away on Monmouth's 13th tee, but general opinion was that we'd just witnessed the Bad Etiquette Classic's first ever hole-in-one. Minutes later it was confirmed; the BEC's greatest ever golf shot ….. though BEC purists might still consider Dave G's putt into the lake in 1996 to retain the edge. No BMW on offer but none-the-less a nearest-the-pin, nett eagle, chip-in for fifteen quid.

And besides great shots, this year also saw some great victories; the Tea Pot bestowed upon a new and worthy Champion (our 7th Teapot Holder in 8 years) and the Scarisbrick Cheese Board wrestled from its holder on a ~~sleep-inducing~~ nerve-jangling back-9 recount.

St Pierre

Pete and I were the first to arrive at the very handsome St Pierre Golf & Country Club and lost no time in checking in. All was hunky dory until the girl at reception produced a large globe from beneath the counter, swiveled it through 90° and proclaimed "You're in Ash Lodge about …… ummm ….. here" pointing to a minor ice flow half an inch from the South Pole.

A strange feeling of deja-vu came over me. I'd almost stayed at the St Pierre Golf & Country Club with my family 20 years ago but not done so because, having been shown to our concrete annex, we'd taken umbrage and left in a hurry. Had the room reservation system not changed in 20 years? Would we be inclined to accept what our elders and wisers had refused before us? Absolutely not. No way Jose-Marie Olazabal.

We appealed to the receptionist's sense of customer service. "You're joking right?" ….. "We specifically booked the main hotel" ….. "We've got written confirmation" ….. "Are we on Candid Camera or what?". The Duty Manager was summoned, following which Pete clearly and concisely explained to him the direct link between declining customer loyalty, venture capital availability (↓), MBO option spread bets (←), local mortgage rates (↑) and Duty Manager pay scales (↓). His response was to offer us 50% off of the first night in the annex and a seamless move prior to nights 2 and 3 in to the main hotel. As far as we were concerned, he could phone a friend or ask the audience but we were damned if we were going 50/50 so the causal chain was extended to unemployment levels (↑) and the probability of GBH (↑). The discount climbed to 100% (↑) and in no time we were laughing all the way back (←) to the (rather smart) annex. With Saturday's dinner and Sunday's golf included in the first night's price (now zero) it was fast becoming one of the best value-for-money BEC's ever.

The Old Course

And so to golf with 2 big questions to be answered as match 1A (pairing Julian & Mark against David L and Jez) got underway (1) would Jez demonstrate the same devastating form that won him the Tea Pot last year? and (2) would Julian demonstrate the same devastating form that lost him £42 and brought him home in last place? Julian's longest drive and nett birdie at the first made his intentions clear, but Jez's form was less easy to read until the back nine when a string of blobs confirmed that all was not well. The match was nip-and-tuck through the front 9 with some pretty decent golf on display but eventually Mark & Julian combined just that bit better scraping home 2&1 and each making a tidy £8.

After 7 years, 138 nett birdies, 476 lost balls and considerable bad etiquette, Pete finally gets his hands on the BEC Tea Pot

Meanwhile in the early stages of match 1B, concentration was hard to muster as two Americans in a golf buggy weaved back-and-forth in pursuit of a bewildering (and apparently widely dispersed) range of golfing equipment; "You folks seen a sand wedge in these parts?" ….. "Not seen my wood cover have ya?" ….. "Pinnacle 3 with a photo of Ronald Reagan on it?".

But once the Americans had gone (presumably having lost all their equipment), concentration was restored and in a hard fought match Peter & Dave G battled to a 2&1 victory over Andy & Richard.

In the afternoon, Mark & Andy dispatched Julian & Richard 4&2 with Andy doing most of the damage, and Pete found some good form partnering Jez scrambling a 1up victory against the Davids and putting himself in the overnight Yellow Cashmere on £24.

The Rolls of Monmouth

With an early tee reservation and Monmouth some distance away, a slick getaway was essential. All we had to do was get-up, meet for breakfast, scan the papers, have a laugh about Ian Woosnam's 15 clubs and go. 7 of us successfully executed these activities and rendez-vous'd in the car park. One did not, and after 15 minutes we were asking ourselves "Where the hell is David L? Had he ordered extra breakfast? Was he still deciding what to wear? Was he locked in the bog? Who knew?

Eventually appearing, he categorically denied that standing alone for a quarter of an hour in some lesser-known car-park (which incidentally he rated highly) was any reason to suspect that he was in error ….. he was adamant that it was the 7 of us and our 5 cars that were in the wrong place.

Being tolerant and forgiving types an on-the-spot lifetime BEC ban and removal of critical organs were waived. But alas David did not overtly seek redemption, hindering our journey many times more with a succession of boot lock, accelerator pedal and wing mirror failures causing him to lose the leading vehicles and contribute to the BEC's second most stressful car journey ever.

Fortunately, Pete J and Mark had called ahead and rescheduled the day's play and we were able to tee-off swiftly. In the first of the morning matches Pete struck a rich seam of form with an astonishing series of positive extras from the 6th to the 12th, plus 6 nett birdies and a nett eagle on his way to a round of 87 nett 67 bringing he and his partner Julian home 6&4 against Jez & Richard. And Pete wasn't just playing the text book shots well either; as ably demonstrated on the 7th green when he produced that old favorite of burying his putter up to the grip on missing a short nett birdie putt. The crowd always loves that one.

Meanwhile, match 3B between Mark & Dave G and Andy and David L was proving to be a match to remember. All square at the 9th the situation was tense with Mark, Andy and David L all finding the lightening fast green in regulation. David did well to get his downhill putt to 2ft, elected to putt-out and missed! Andy then also 3-putted giving Mark a chance to strike a killer blow with a 6ft putt up the hill for the front nine. But he missed too …..

Records set during the 8th BEC

- First hole-in-one (Andy at the 13th, Monmouth)
- Severest mauling of a Stroke Index 1 (2 NE's and 2 NB's at the 5th, St Pierre Old Course)
- Equal lowest ever win rate (Richard, 0.00)
- Most BEC participants in a Jacuzzi (4)
- Greatest ever contribution to global warming (6 cars between 8)
- Most consecutive match losses (Dave G & Julian, played 6 lost 6)

In the Hole !

….. And so it continued to the 13th tee (needless to say all square) with little inkling of the drama about to unfold as Andy's already legendary 7-iron flew towards the flag. It landed close and after trickling back towards the hole disappeared from view. Had it gone in? We weren't certain but were sufficiently convinced to congratulate Andy on his first ever hole-in-one and the greatest ever shot in the history of the Bad Etiquette Classic. A difficult act to follow certainly, although not perhaps as difficult as his partner David L made it look, dip-hooking his tee-shot into the trees. After the Lord Mayor's Show.

Mark on the other hand was unperturbed and hit a 7-iron following the exact same trajectory as Andy's and pitching (we later discovered) just 12" from Andy's own pitch-mark. But amidst the euphoria following the retrieval of Andy's ball from the hole Mark was unable to hole his 4ft putt for the story of "The birdie 2 that lost to an Ace".

Mark & Dave hung on squaring the match again at the 16th, but by the 17th Andy's hole-in-one had given him a definite psychological advantage and he finished them off single-handedly with par nett birdies at the 17th and 18th to win 2 up.

In the afternoon, following a notable absence of free drinks at the bar, one of the BEC's most cherished records was briefly in jeopardy when Julian & Dave G of "played 5 lost 5" fame found themselves 1 up at the turn. But in a keen defence of the record book Mark & Pete averted the crisis by winning 5 of the next 6 holes and the match 4&3 and Pete contributed significantly to his overnight lead with 7 positive extras in the last 8 holes.

Match 4B was another nail-biter with Jez & Andy 3up after 5 but unable to shake off a dogged performance from David L and Richard who clung on to reach the 18th dormy 1 down on the match and all square on the back 9. With the 18th no easy par 3 at 199yds and with a stream down the right and in front of the green, David's decision to lay-up appeared to be vindicated (with Andy missing wide to the right and Jez finding trouble) until he duffed his chip into the stream kissing the match goodbye and leaving Richard to salvage a half on the back 9.

Apres Golf

Some fine après golf was on display this year with participants demonstrating their machismo through a variety of athletic pursuits following the golf each day.

Julian and Dave G went jogging, the former wearing an obscene pair of running shorts exposing acres of thigh and buttock (off-putting for those savoring a tranquil beer on the patio) and the latter wearing wrap-around mirror sun-glasses to minimise vision and maximize the chances of falling on top of beautiful Hungarian females bending over to retie their shoelaces during the Budapest marathon. Peter, meanwhile, in the absence of a willing partner, played with himself (on the tennis courts), lifted some weights, went for a run and did 50 lengths of the hotel pool before joining Mark and Andy for a spell in the jacuzzi.

Sadly, performances around the grand piano were rather lack-luster this year without the promised BEC song sheets and in the absence of Angie, any American blondes or other supporting artistes of previous years.

The Mathern Course

Our original plan was to play Dewstow on the final morning, but after the Lawless shambles of the day before the prospect of driving any distance in convoy was frankly unthinkable so instead we opted for St Pierre's second 18 holes - The Mathern Course situated just 15yds from the dining room. Not as good as the Old Course or Monmouth by a short putt or long shot, but none-the-less an interesting test of golf with 6 par 4's under 350yds and 4 par 3's over 180yds.

With the two main contenders in the second 4-ball there was relatively little media interest in match 5A in which Julian & David L took the opportunity to fill their boots against Richard & Dave G winning 2&1, pocketing £15 each and putting themselves top of the all time match pairings (played 5 won 4).

Participants at the 8th Bad Etiquette Classic
St Pierre Golf & Country Club (2001)

And in a repeat of the cruel twist of 1997, Pete & Andy, leading the field on £61 and £38 respectively, found themselves once again paired together for the final round. Although Pete's lead looked pretty-much unassailable, Mark & Jez were determined to give the leaders a run for their money and did so right from the start combining well and building up a 4 hole lead by the turn. The match might well have been level by the 13th as Andy began to play flawlessly setting himself up with good birdie chances at 11, 12 and 13, but Andy's putts stayed above ground and he was forced to look on as Mark scrambled halves with a fighting single putts.

At the 14th both Peter and Andy (by then 4 down with 5 to play) hit long straight drives off the tee only to find a lateral hazard thought out of range, and at the 17th (with the match safe, but with the back 9 very much to play for) Jez took 5 to get down from 20yds in a fit of the shakes (registering 6.4 on the Richter Scale), leaving he and Mark dormy 1 down on the match. Only Mark's well struck 5-wood into the wind and the heart of the 186yds 18th saved the back 9 and three valuable quid.

BEC's Golfing Greats

Mark Powderham

Despite remonstrations that foot & mouth had limited how much he'd been able to play ….. (he looked well enough to most present) ….. a member of Crowborough Beacon GC since the previous October, Mark was expected to be better prepared for the 8th BEC than in previous years.

And indeed, Mark's challenge did get off to an excellent start with an 83 nett 71 around the St Pierre Old Course. But, whilst he played steadily throughout, recording only 14 double bogies (a BEC record), only 12 over handicap, winning 4 out of 5 matches and making money in all rounds, he was simply unable to keep up with the leaders. That said, some determined play in the final round enabled him to overhaul Andy and achieve overall 2nd place with total takings of £36.

David Law

Despite a steady stream of nett birdies and other positive extras David lost money during the early rounds. Analysis shows that this was largely down to poor match results. However, whilst in year's gone by he might have blamed his partners, a "partner result" of +12 makes clear that his partners actually performed admirably and that the root cause lies fair and square at the foot of his own golf bag. David's handicap rose to 18 during the event erasing 16, the Universal Constant of the 1994 - 2000 era, ever further from collective memory.

Julian Malton

Following anni horribili in 1999 and 2000, Julian restored investor confidence this year. Five sub-100 rounds, 16 nett birdies and a good spattering of positive extras brought Julian home in the black at £18 and 4th place, his best finish since 1996. Victories with David L and Mark also retained his claim to a share of 2 of the top 3 all-time most successful pairings.

An overall result of just +6, and lowest net scores in the first and final rounds (although narrowly missing out on the Scarisbrick Trophy) answered many of the questions asked before the event and provided firm evidence of the significant improvement in Julian's form this year. Perhaps the only question remaining is "what happened to the bloody song sheets?".

Peter Jacobs

After so many disappointments and a runner's-up record second only to Phil Michelson, this was the year that Pete came good and finally got his hands on the Tea Pot.

As in so many previous years Pete got off to a cracking start, but this time he refused to capitulate leading the event after every round and playing 2 outstanding rounds at Monmouth (including a nett 67) to put him beyond reach. As if his maiden victory in the BEC were not enough, winnings of £50 also took Pete to the top of the all time Order of Merit on exactly £200.

Once more Pete led the field with 18 nett birdies (taking his all time tally to 138) and his historical match win rate of 0.62 second only to the legendary (and oft purposefully forgotten) John Casale.

Thanks yet again to Pete for his outstanding organization in the run up to the event.

"Leader in the club house" – Julian congratulates himself on yet another fine performance

Richard Reeves

Having called upon his MLI and struggled home in last place for the second time in his career, Richard left the 8th BEC vowing to take lessons and play more ….. a similar if not identical vow to that heard the previous year. And he had good reason to be disappointed with a win rate of 0.000000 and no positive extras. Just one bogie 6 in 15 par 5 attempts might also weigh heavily on his mind. The Richard Reeves fan club has reported a dramatic collapse in membership (from 3 to 2) and the general golfing public has become increasingly desperate for a return to the form that earned him more favorable and respectful reviews in '97 / '98 and at least briefly contained his spiraling career losses.

Off the course, Richard's only reported indiscretion was to make an inappropriate reference to "a couple of large jugs" when ordering beers from a waitress in the hotel.

Andy Slamin

What can one say? Never mind the fact that Andy has gone two years without winning the BEC, never mind his disappointing 3rd place, forget his two match losses and the increase in his handicap to 14; what does any of that matter when after 25 years of endeavor you hole-in-one or, more to the point, hit the greatest shot in BEC history? Andy and those of us who were fortunate enough to be present will remember his Gross-eagle-nett-eagle-nearest-the-pin-hole-win-chip-in-Ace at Monmouth's 169yds SI16 13th for the rest of our days ….. and it could be a year or two before the BEC witnesses a better shot.

But alas, one shot is not enough, and Andy had to settle for 3rd place with winnings of £23 and relinquished his leadership of the BEC all time Order of Merit.

Editors note: Whilst Andy will treasure the memory of his miraculous hole-in-one at Monmouth, he will not be able to treasure the ball itself as, in his euphoria, he forget to pocket it and hooked it irredeemably into the bushes off the next tee!

David Grimbley

Four weeks of intensive tuition at the David Leadbetter School of Golf in Spain ought to have honed Dave's golf to perfection and indeed some aspects of his game were improved. A longest drive in every morning round doubled Dave's all time LD total and had a number of us watching carefully what he was having for breakfast each morning. With 2 nearest-the-pins too, it was clear that Dave had been working hard on his tee shots. But, his putt clean off the green and down a bank at Monmouth's 8th (after having found the front of the green from the tee) brought back fond memories and left us less certain about the quality of the putting tuition he'd received.

Whilst saddened by 4 match losses and overall 7th place, Dave will no doubt be delighted to have retained the Skarisbrick Trophy narrowly beating Julian on countback over the last 9 holes.

Jez Ellison

Five pars this year compared to 19 last speaks volumes. The BEC Tea Pot Holder never looked as self assured as in 2000 when he won in such remarkable and convincing style. From his opening sortie of back-to-back double-bogies at the 1st and 2nd holes to his blob-blob-blob-blob-blob-blob-blob-blob finish (blob^8) from the 83rd he didn't exactly have any of us trembling in our Footjoys.

In 6th position with losses of £15 and with 13 nett birdies providing little consolation, it can only be hoped that 2001 was simply an off year for Jez and one from which he will recover both fully and speedily.

New Look Stats

Always responsive to reader's feedback & suggestions ("I don't know why you bother?", "Couldn't you make it shorter, funny or perhaps interesting?") I've made one or two enhancements to the stats. Alongside your scores and totals you can now see your averages. "Now you're talking!"

See you at the 9th BEC
20th July 2002